Headache

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by livinginthetheater

Summary

They won, and Marcus was finally dead. Leo played a pretty big role in it too. So why can't he sleep? And if Marcus is dead, then who just broke into his living room?

Takes place immediately after The Bionic Showdown in season 2. An alternate ending to the episode where Marcus survives being crushed under the rubble and goes to find Leo. Pre-season 3 so no bionic Leo yet!

Notes

2/02/2025 I have not thought about this show in two and a half years, but I reread this for fun and decided to edit it on a whim. I added some stuff too, and tags because this is lowkey darker than I remembered—and I love it

anyway enjoy!

Marcus was dead.

Leo stared up at the ceiling of his bedroom, watching his fan quickly spin around and around. An old trick he had learned; catching a single blade with his eye and following it as it whipped past. He thought it was better than counting sheep, at least. But it wasn't working tonight, and he didn't know why.

Yes, you do, his traitorous and throbbing head told him.

Marcus was dead.

Leo should have been sleeping easy since that was true. They won. Today was a success. More than that, Leo was an integral part of this success. Had he not shown up when he did, Douglas may have been able to activate the Triton app, and his siblings would have been lost to him forever.

That sparked a gruesome thought. What if the Triton app had been activated? Would Douglas have made Adam, Bree, and Chase rip Leo apart themselves? A lot of good that exoskeleton would do with all three of their bionics trained on him. Except, *Marcus* had all three of their bionics, and Leo was still alive. Still watching the fan, trying to sleep, very much alive.

Marcus was dead.

It was a mantra. Perhaps if Leo repeated it enough times, he'd fall asleep, lulled by the safety he was supposed to feel. Marcus, the face he had seen every night before he went to sleep, was dead. That horrible chapter of his life was over. No more worry, no more fear. He didn't have to keep Marcus' bionics a secret, and now no one in his family would think he was a pathological, jealous liar anymore.

Marcus was dead.

His head hurt. It ached. When the exoskeleton had fallen on the floor, Leo's head had cracked against the helmet, making him see stars. It still could now. He didn't know what to do about it. It had been hours, but it hadn't gone away.

Adam's new ability destroyed the lair, making the house above cave in onto Marcus. That was how he died. But... Leo had burst in, damaging the house's structure with the exoskeleton. Would the roof have collapsed on Marcus if he hadn't done that? Adam had discovered his

new ability saving Leo's life. If Leo hadn't been there if he hadn't come back, if he hadn't let Marcus get the drop on him, would the house be intact? Would Marcus be dead?

It didn't matter. Marcus was dead.

Everything was over. They didn't know where Douglas slunk off to, but it was doubtful he'd strike anytime soon. Besides, Leo had a hard time seeing Douglas as a threat. He was certainly no Marcus.

And Marcus was dead.

And Leo wasn't going to sleep.

Breaking his staring contest with the hanging fan, Leo slid from under the covers. He padded out to the kitchen, his bare feet on the cold hardwood sending shivers through his body. He wrapped his arms around himself, rubbing his fingers over his new goosebumps. The dark, silent mansion did little to settle his nerves.

He stared at a fixed point on the counter as he flicked on the tap. The house always felt so large and foreign at times like this. He could almost believe the entire place was deserted, but it comforted him to picture Adam, Bree, and Chase snoring away beneath his feet. How could anyone live in a place like this, if they were all alone? No footsteps but their own, no sound but the hum of the air conditioner?

The discovery was still fresh, but Leo could understand why Donald Davenport would take his brother's children. In this eerie, indulgent house, he understood Donald Davenport completely. An empty house, needing someone to fill it with sound. In fact, the brothers probably have more in common than they think.

Leo was startled from his thoughts by the sudden cold as his glass had overflowed onto his hands, the tap still running.

He wiped his hands on a towel, and finally considered waking his mom and telling her something was wrong, but he was frozen by a sound behind him. It was the sound of the door latch quietly clicking. Leo was still, his back to the front door, scared to turn around.

Perhaps, had the mansion not been so silent, Leo wouldn't have even heard the door open. But he heard it alright, he heard the door shut again, softly as it had been opened. And he understood that *someone was in the house.* And his typical luck told him that it was not Davenport returning from a one o'clock stroll.

The footsteps he heard behind him were slow, the pace tentative. Leo understood with sudden clarity that the intruder did not yet realize they were not alone.

What was Leo supposed to do? He felt fiercely protective of his family, a wave of courage replacing his wariness. The intruder couldn't know Leo was there, so he slowly reached out to the knife block, nearly out of reach. He waited for any change in sound to reveal that he had been caught, but none came.

Knife firmly in hand, though small and skinny as it was, Leo felt the adrenaline kick in. This guy picked the wrong mansion to rob, that was for sure. However, they clearly chose the best time to show up. With Eddy out of commission—because of Leo—their home security system wouldn't wake Davenport, or the teens, or notify the police. And the only one who knew it was happening was Leo, arguably the least formidable out of anyone in the house.

But the footsteps grew closer, heading to the dining room table or the hall, Leo couldn't quite tell. But they were not going through the kitchen, and Leo must have been too still, and the room too dark, to be seen.

Leo was probably not equipped to stop a burglary. But he was angry. He was sad. He was terrified. He had just survived the best or possibly the worst night of his life, and Marcus was dead.

Leo lunged.

He wasn't sure of his plan if he caught the intruder. And yet he found himself hooking an arm around someone's chest, holding the kitchen knife to someone's throat. And someone stilled in his grasp, a grasp Leo had not expected himself to be capable of.

He had no mask, no black outfit.

And though Leo only saw the back of his head, he knew.

He was holding a knife that was as useless as a toothpick to Marcus' throat.

Marcus was *alive*.

For a moment they just stood there, nothing but the sound of their breathing and that horrible air conditioner. Leo was waiting for Marcus to snap the knife like a pencil, and turn his laser vision on

Leo's skull. Or maybe he'd spin around and grab Leo's neck in his hand, squeezing as Leo's esophagus popped like a balloon. After all, he had to be here for revenge. Leo had killed him, hadn't he? Nearly, at least?

Marcus didn't move. And neither did Leo.

He considered screaming until his voice went hoarse. Davenport and his mom would wake up, come running out, and get Adam, Bree, and Chase. But Leo couldn't seem to open his mouth. He couldn't fill the silent house with sound. He knew then that he didn't *want* to, and he didn't know why.

He knew he was terrified, and Marcus could hear his heart beating even without bionic senses.

After a minute of resting in the tense silence, Marcus' voice came out as a whisper that made Leo even colder than he had already been. "First time taking a hostage, Leo?" the sound dripped with its familiar impertinence that, even quiet, was still chilling.

Fighting through his fear, Leo tightened his fingers around the knife, steadying his shaking hand. "*Move,*" he hissed through gritted teeth. He meant to come off intimidating and hoped Marcus couldn't see through it like he always did.

But Marcus walked, and Leo followed, still holding the knife flush to Marcus' throat. Leo was aware of how close they were to make this marching order work. His chest brushed against Marcus' back. He could smell Marcus' sweat, which was surprisingly human. Too, he could smell the industrial stench of oil and metal, as well as the sandy scent of plaster, concrete, and wood. The evidence of what Leo had done to him. Occasionally, as they walked, Leo's nose would graze against Marcus' shoulder blades. His fear was only increased at their proximity, and his heart beat faster with each accidental touch.

Arriving at his bedroom, Leo nudged Marcus forward, and he shut the door behind him. He suddenly knew why he came here, and not anywhere else.

He was certain, Marcus had come to kill him. And he had no choice but to let him.

He lowered the knife.

Slowly stepping back, Leo felt colder without Marcus' body pressed

against his. As Leo distanced himself, Marcus turned to look at him. It was the first time Leo had seen his face since the android had stood over him, small circular saws protruding between his fingers only hours earlier.

The first time since he looked into Marcus' eyes as the roof collapsed.

Marcus was alive.

Marcus raised a familiar eyebrow at Leo. "You know, most people don't put down the knife," he said, amused.

Leo shivered, his whole body shaking now. "My knife wouldn't do anything to you, would it?" he hazarded a guess. "You're not… human. You probably don't… bleed." Marcus nodded, but he looked away. Despite the situation, Leo felt a pang of guilt for what he said, eliciting that response. Then he remembered that he upset the guy who came here to murder him. "Please," he said quietly, barely above a whisper. "Just do it quickly. And don't hurt anyone else."

Much to Leo's surprise, Marcus looked confused if not a little surprised himself. "I didn't… I'm not… I won't hurt you, Leo."

Leo stared at him, waiting for the eyebrow and grin to pop out, but they didn't. Marcus held his gaze. They stayed like that for a long time, surrounded by darkness, faces only lit by the moonlight that streamed in from Leo's window. The longer they looked, the more Leo calmed down.

"Can any of your family…?" Marcus trailed off, looking around as if to emphasize his point. Leo knew what he was asking.

"The rooms are soundproof," Leo told him. "We never needed to worry about it being a problem because Eddy's in every room. Except… tonight."

Here Marcus raised his eyebrow again. "You took me, knife to my throat, to your soundproof bedroom, alone, believing I came here to kill you?" he asked. "Leo… why?" Marcus seemed completely lost for words at Leo's perceived stupidity. Hearing him say it out loud made it sound crazy to Leo too.

But he only shrugged, feeling awkward and defensive. "I don't know."

Marcus took a step closer to Leo. "Leo," he said again, "why?" His voice was deep and frightening, more intimidating. More like the

Marcus Leo had seen so many times before.

“I didn’t want you to hurt anyone. I thought you were dead, so I assumed you came to… kill me. Better not to make a scene. I don’t want anyone else to get hurt tonight.” His head began to throb again, and he felt slightly sick. But he couldn’t tell his fear-nausea from his head-nausea.

“I didn’t come here to hurt…” Marcus trailed off with a sigh.

“Then why *did* you come?” Leo asked, surprised at how calm his voice managed to be.

Marcus let out a little chuckle that caught Leo off guard. He had a nice laugh. “I came because you dropped this,” Marcus said. He fished his hand in his pocket, pulling out a watch. It was Leo’s watch, the one from an airplane catalog. The one he angrily abandoned Eddy on in the yard outside of Marcus’ lair. The screen was shut off, and Eddy hadn’t yet piped in to yell at him.

“Is Eddy…?”

“He’s sleeping,” Marcus explained. “I don’t think he likes me too much, so I thought this was better. He should wake up tomorrow though. I didn’t kill him,” Marcus added, defensively. “See?” he tapped the watch’s screen and it lit up, an image of Eddy’s familiar shape, eyes closed, head bobbing up and down in an imitation of snoring.

Leo blinked a couple of times as if it would change what he was seeing. “You’re trying to tell me you broke into my house to… return my watch?”

Marcus looked at the floor. “Well... yeah, pretty much,” he mumbled. His head snapped back up, his familiar heated glare directed at Leo. “You weren’t supposed to be awake. No one was supposed to know I was here!”

Leo took another step back at Marcus’ anger. As he did so, the anger melted, and Marcus just looked tired. “Sorry,” Leo said, and he wasn’t sure what he was apologizing for. Marcus didn’t look like he knew either.

Leo’s head pounded more than before, and suddenly Marcus didn’t seem so scary anymore. The android watched him curiously as Leo crossed the room and sat at the foot of his bed, legs barely brushing

the floor. Marcus waited a beat for Leo to say something, likely to tell him to get out, but when he didn't, Marcus settled against the wall across from the bed. He slid to the floor, feet planted and arms extended over each knee.

Marcus didn't *look* like a robot. He hadn't felt like one either, when Leo led him to his room. The skin of his neck had felt smooth as Leo's thumb had occasionally brushed it. His body felt warm, pressed to Leo's front. Not like a robot at all.

However, Marcus' new position drew Leo's attention to Marcus' hands. *Hand,* at least. Marcus' left arm ended abruptly at his wrist. Though it was still dark in his bedroom, Leo could see a silver glint shine where the appendage had been cut off.

Marcus caught him staring. "Came off when I was climbing out," he explained, tucking his arm behind his back. "My dad could probably reattach it, but… I don't think he will."

"Why not?" Leo asked honestly.

Marcus looked away for a moment. "He left. He just left me there. Left me to die."

Leo wasn't sure what to say to that. He didn't know if Marcus even wanted him to say anything. What does one say to a typically evil, super-powered android that had broken into one's house to return one's home security system and was now sitting in one's bedroom, unbeknownst to one's family? After all, is this all turned out to be some elaborate game, where Marcus was toying with him, then he could decide at any time to stop messing around and kill Leo.

But for some reason, Leo didn't believe that.

"I'm sorry about Douglas," Leo told him. He wasn't sure if he meant it, but he tried to imagine Big D leaving him to die under the ruins of their lab and shuddered. A thought came to him then. "What about your charging capsule?" he asked. "How will you recharge?"

"Douglas has a backup," Marcus explained. "I'll need to charge there tomorrow. It's not a homey kind of place, but it'll do."

"Do you think Douglas fled there? Maybe he knew you wouldn't die, and he's—"

"My father is a coward, Leo," Marcus interrupted harshly. "He won't

show his face anywhere he might be found, not for a long time. In fact…" Marcus couldn't finish his thought, and Leo wasn't going to ask him to.

Before Leo could figure out what he was supposed to say next, Marcus stood. Leo tensed, unsure what he was doing, as Marcus walked toward him. Still, Leo didn't move, even as Marcus sat on the edge of the bed next to Leo. He left as much space between them as he could without falling off, but it was a narrow mattress and they were rather close. Leo felt his heart beat faster, but he didn't feel scared, just nervous. That was new.

"Is this… okay?" Marcus asked tentatively. Leo nodded, and Marcus gave him a soft, awkward smile. "Can I tell you something?"

"Yeah."

"I knew you were wearing a vest."

Leo turned his head to look at Marcus, confused. "What?"

"When I electrocuted you, outside the house tonight. My dad told me to finish you off, but I—I couldn't do it. I scanned the area, noted the vest, and aimed for it, knowing it would protect you."

Leo was caught off guard, and he felt his face heat up. "I don't get it. You hate me," he reminded him. "Why not aim for my head or something?"

"I didn't want to hurt you."

"What?" Leo didn't mask the shock in his voice. "You've always wanted to hurt me. You're Marcus. I'm Leo. Remember?"

"I hated pretending to be Adam, Bree, and Chase's friend."

"Marcus, please don't change the subject, this—"

"I'm not! Just let me say this okay?" Leo nodded, and Marcus continued. "I *hated* it. It wasn't the lying—that part was easy. I was just… annoyed. How the hell could the smartest guy in the world not tell I was a liar? How could some of the best-trained spies and soldiers ever created not recognize themselves in someone else? I don't even think my acting was that good. It's not exactly a bionic skill," he said with another small smile. Leo surprised himself by laughing. "But you Leo, you were something else. No bionics, no super-genius, but you

saw through me instantly. You knew, you just *knew* that I was bad. You saw straight through all that deception that enamored your siblings, straight to the core of me. Of my mission. And when you got swept up in all that band nonsense, and you decided to try to trust me, I couldn't let you."

"I always wondered about that," Leo replied. "You didn't have to smash your guitar or blame it on me. It didn't help your overall goal, because your plans had nothing to do with me. I never understood why you'd reveal yourself. Why you wouldn't just trick me too."

Marcus crossed his arms in front of his chest. "I didn't want you to be fooled along with your siblings. You had seen me, and I didn't want you to stop looking. You're... well, you're crazy impressive, Leo."

"That's definitely not true," Leo said with a laugh, but Marcus' face was completely serious.

"It is. Somehow you were smarter than all three of them, and you never backed down when I threatened you. You still kept trying everything to save your siblings from me, no matter the peril it caused you. So I wanted to keep you away from my father, and somehow not kill you in the process. I thought it worked. And I was furious when you came back with that stupid fucking exoskeleton. You were supposed to leave, supposed to be safe, and you threw yourself right back into the fray. And I was so mad I could have killed you. And I guess I was about to."

Leo thought for a minute before responding. "Would you have?" he asked boldly. Marcus raised an eyebrow at him. "You can tell me the truth, I won't get mad. But would you have? If Adam hadn't discovered his new ability?"

Marcus looked away. "Maybe. Maybe not. I don't… maybe." He looked back at Leo. "I didn't want to, my dad expected me too, and... if I had killed you, I would have regretted it," he told him, his eyes shining. "When that rubble crushed me, all I could think was, *thank God.*"

"Hey!" Leo said, louder and sharper than he wanted to. "Shut up, Marcus. Don't say shit like that."

Marcus' confusion was plain on his face. "I tried to kill you, Leo. I just told you I would have killed you if Adam hadn't—"

"But Adam did. And I'm not dead!"

“Well neither am I!”

"Good!"

"Great!"

“Then why are we yelling at each other?!”

“I don’t know!” Marcus shouted in exasperation.

“Then can we stop?!” Leo shouted back, his head pounding, the room spinning. His voice suddenly failed him, and his words came out faint and quiet. “I don’t feel good, Marcus,” he said, taking in a big gasp of air. The headache he’d been fighting all night blurred his vision and he felt his stomach turn violently. The screaming match had sent his head spinning, and he knew things were getting worse.

“What’s wrong?” Marcus’ fight had melted into concern. “Leo? What’s going on?”

Leo instinctively felt the back of his head, the section that had been hurting the most. He hissed as his fingers met a tender spot and pulled his hand away quickly. Much to his and Marcus’ horror, his fingers were now spotted with blood.

Marcus climbed further back on the bed, behind Leo. He felt Marcus’ remaining hand brushing the nape of his neck and traveling up through his hair, gently pressed against his scalp. The fingers stopped just shy of the spot Leo had just investigated. “Marcus, I don’t feel good,” Leo repeated. He was tired and sick and scared, and as surprising as this entire evening had been, he found himself wanting Marcus to comfort him and tell him he was going to be okay.

“Shit Leo, did this happen during the fight?!”

Leo waded through murky recollections as his brain felt overcome with fog. “Yes I think… when the exoskeleton fell, my head...”

“Dammit!” Marcus swore. “And the smartest kid in the world and the rest of the dream team didn’t check to see if you were hurt?”

“Marcus…” Leo muttered, but he didn’t have enough energy to argue with him.

“I have to stop the bleeding,” Marcus said, letting his argument go. “Where do you keep the first aid?”

“The lab,” Leo told him, and immediately regretted it as Marcus stood and made for the door. “Wait,” Leo grabbed Marcus’ arm, catching the android off guard. “Don’t go down there,” he begged him. He hadn’t let go of his forearm. “I’ll go.”

“You’ll *stay* because you shouldn’t have been walking around at all,” Marcus scolded him with surprising tenderness. “You need to lie down and keep your head still.” Marcus pried Leo’s fingers from his arm and pushed him back down on the bed. Leo moaned in what might have been pain, nausea, or defiance, but he let Marcus coax him down. Marcus put several pillows beneath Leo’s head and shoulders. “Keep that elevated, I’ll be back.”

“Please, they’ll kill you if they see you,” Leo fought back weakly.

Marcus looked down at him, an odd expression on his face. “I’ll be quiet,” he said in a whisper.

“Promise?”

Marcus’ expression only grew stranger. “I promise,” he said breathlessly before slinking out.

It was silent in Leo’s room for a long while after that. He stared up again at his fan, spinning and spinning, and Leo tried to concentrate on not falling asleep this time. It briefly crossed his mind how strange it was that Marcus was somewhere underfoot, yet it didn’t scare him. It comforted him instead. Were Leo's feelings of safety and vulnerability around Marcus just because of his head? Or was it something else? Somehow, the jagged knife's edge the two had been balancing on for a year tipped them over to the other side. The fear and tension had morphed into something warm, something fierce.

Marcus finally returned after a few minutes. “Leo?” he asked softly. “Still with me?”

“Unfortunately.”

Marcus chuckled and he sat by Leo’s side on the bed. He lifted Leo’s head and cradled it in the crook of his elbow as he used his hand to handle the gauze. In the boy's arms, Leo felt free to release a shaky breath.

“Did anyone see you?”

Marcus shook his head, continuing his work. “Of course not Dooley,”

he responded lightly. “I’ve snuck in here before, remember? Not to mention we’ve been spying on you for months, so I knew exactly where to go.”

Leo smirked at him. “Stalker,” he teased, which pried another laugh out of Marcus.

“Yeah, well they were pretty boring when you weren’t around.”

“Obviously,” Leo said, and they both devolved into muted laughter.

Marcus beamed as he set Leo’s head back down on the pillow. “There,” he said proudly, his hand still between Leo’s head and the pillow, tangled in his short hair. “All done. Keep breathing through the night and I won’t have to worry."

"And are you?" Leo asked, filled with sudden confidence. "Worried about me?"

Marcus' brown eyes gazed intensely into his, and Leo burned beneath his gaze. But Marcus looked away, clearing his throat. "Tell Mr. Davenport in the morning about your head. I already did an x-ray and you should be alright. With rest,” he reprimanded light-heartedly, but all Leo could focus on was the hand still in his hair, resting gently on his scalp.

They stared at each other again, unreadable expressions on both their faces. Leo waited for Marcus to remove his hand. Marcus waited for Leo to tell him to. Neither of them wanted to.

“You’re going to be okay,” Marcus said softly, and tears sprung to Leo’s eyes. He was surprised but not unhappy to see Marcus look the same.

Leo’s arm reached up and gently clasped his hand around Marcus’ other wrist. Marcus looked down at his missing hand, insecurity and fear at Leo’s touch. But Leo rubbed his thumb back and forth against Marcus’ wrist, unaverred. “You’re going to be okay,” Leo echoed.

He felt in that moment that none of it mattered. All of the moments he’d spent alone with Marcus, scared and angry, felt foreign now. As he looked up into Marcus’ eyes, he didn’t see a cold-blooded robot, he saw *Marcus*. A sad, scared teenage boy, who had no idea what to do now. And neither did Leo.

And it didn’t matter, not really.

“I should go,” Marcus whispered. He hadn’t moved his hand away.

“No you shouldn’t,” Leo said. It was an invitation, an offering. The tears in Marcus’ eyes shone.

Gently, Marcus pulled his hand away. “I’ve only ever hurt you,” he said softly.

“But not tonight, right?” Leo said. “Besides, you should be worried about me. What if I stop breathing in the middle of the night, huh? Then I’d haunt you, and you'd really get sick of me.”

Marcus laughed. “You’re ridiculous, Leo.”

“Maybe a little bit,” Leo admitted with a grin. “But I’m right. Stay. *Please.* I…” he wasn’t sure if he should finish his thought. “I don’t want you to leave, Marcus.”

Marcus stood up and Leo tried to bite back his disappointment. But rather than head to the door, he rounded to the other side of the bed and climbed in. Leo didn’t turn, didn’t move at all in case it scared Marcus off.

Leo felt Marcus wrap his arm around him, which pulled a stunned gasp from him. The sound made Marcus waver, uncertain, but Leo didn't give him the chance to pull back, fitting himself closer in Marcus’ grasp.

“Is this… okay?” Marcus sounded worried, and Leo nodded.

“It's perfect. Thank you." Then, unable to help himself, Leo started giggling. "Sorry, I’m not laughing because of you, I just realized that this is the opposite of how we were earlier.”

It took Marcus a second to understand, but then he laughed too. “At least I don’t have a knife to your throat.”

“I doubt you'd need one,” Leo observed honestly.

Marcus tensed, and Leo regretted his words. “Does that… scare you?”

Leo shook his head as best he could sandwiched in the bed as he was. “No,” he said simply. “You won’t hurt me.”

“How are you so certain? After everything I did?”

“Because I killed you, Marcus, and you came back to return my watch.

And you’re staying.”

Marcus’ arm tightened around Leo. “You should hate me. This just doesn’t feel real.”

Leo lightly grasped Marcus’ remaining hand, studying his palm and tracing its lines. “Feels real to me,” he said, and he knew Marcus understood what he meant.

Marcus nuzzled his head into the nape of Leo’s neck, his breath tickling the bottom of Leo's scalp. “I’m glad.”

Leo wasn't sure what boundary they had crossed, or how they had done it so it easily, but he was able to let out a shaky breath. All of the tension, anger, fear, and pain of his relationship with Marcus was released in that one puff of air. In its place was only the feeling of Marcus' arm draped over him, the warmth of his body against Leo's.

They stayed like that for a long time. Leo didn’t feel so nauseous anymore. He felt anchored in Marcus’ arms. He didn’t want to fall asleep and have it all speed past him, but he was safe as long as Marcus held him here. There was a lot left to say from both of them and a lot they were skipping right past, but Leo didn’t want to talk about any of that right now.

Marcus was alive.

“Hey, how did you know I’m the little spoon?”

“Shut up and go to sleep, Leo.”

~

Leo blinked his eyes open, his room flooded with sunlight. He opened his eyes to the sight of Marcus’ face inches from his own. At some point in the night, he must have turned, because Marcus’ arm was still over his shoulder, holding him close. Leo thought briefly about how easily they fit together and wondered if he should be feeling some sense of shame. He didn’t, of course. Instead, he gently pressed his forehead to Marcus’. The android opened his eyes.

“You’re awake.”

“Looks like I kept breathing.”

They stayed like that for a bit, looking at one another, before Leo

started laughing.

“Oh god.”

“What?”

“You’re an android.”

“…yes.”

“You don’t sleep, do you?”

Marcus smiled almost evilly at him. “No. But I kept my eyes closed to pretend I was. I thought it might be a bit weird if you woke up and I was staring at you. You snore, you know.” They both started giggling, bodies shaking in sync. “I kept thinking about Mr. Davenport walking in,” Marcus said mid-laugh. “Imagine trying to explain this one.”

Leo laughed harder. “I’d feign innocence.”

“Really?” Marcus said, grinning. “‘Hey Big D,’” he began in a fake, higher-pitched voice nowhere close to what Leo sounded like. “‘Whoa, how’d Marcus get in my bed?!’”

They began laughing so hard tears came to their eyes, and they both sat up, finally detaching from one another.

“How are you feeling?” Marcus asked.

“Better,” Leo said, hovering his hand above the spot he knew Marcus patched up. “I wish… I wish you didn’t have to go.”

The mood in the room dipped. “I wish that too,” Marcus admitted.

“You could come back. After you recharge. While you’re gone, I can explain everything. Tell Big D, my mom, and—”

“Tell them what?” Marcus asked softly. “That I’m really sorry I kidnapped and almost enslaved them? That I’m sorry I made them think you were dead, only to then try and kill you when you weren’t?”

Leo looked down at his legs. “Well, all of that’s true. You *are* sorry.”

“And you’re probably the only person in the world who could forgive me, Leo,” Marcus said, smiling sadly at him. He cupped Leo's cheek in his palm, and Leo covered his hand with his own, holding it there. “I hurt you. A lot. They won’t forgive me for that.”

“I tried to kill you too,” Leo attempted, but he knew what Marcus was saying.

“It’s not the same,” Marcus replied. “But you know that. I have to go, and you know that too. I only have a few minutes before Eddy turns back on, and he’ll see me in here. That can’t happen.”

“Promise me I’ll see you again,” Leo said, almost frantic as Marcus stood up.

“I don’t know if that’s safe—”

“I don’t care, Marcus. Promise me that I’ll see you again.” Leo was losing the fight against his tears, feeling desperate not to lose what he just found.

Marcus sighed, but he looked as upset as Leo. “I can’t make that promise, Leo.” He bent down and pressed their foreheads together again. “But I can promise this is the last time I’ll ever hurt you.”

Marcus pulled away and walked toward the door. “*Promise me!*” Leo shouted after him, sobbing, but Marcus didn’t even turn around.

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